



U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

HOW TO PREPARE FOR A SITE VISIT

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) Office is providing the following guidance to educational institutions expecting a site visit in conjunction with the adjudication of Form I-17, *Petition for Approval of School Attendance by Non-Immigrant Students*, as required by regulation 8 CFR 214.3(h)(2).

What to Expect

An inspector, contracted by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), will contact the Primary Designated School Official (PDSO) to arrange for the visit. The inspector has some flexibility in scheduling; however, the site visit results must be received at the SEVP office within 10 days of the assignment. She/he will arrive on campus with a letter of introduction and a form of identification. The inspector will spend 2-3 hours touring the facility, interviewing designated school officials, and reviewing student files. The time spent during the site visit is directly related to the size of the school's facility, i.e. smaller institutions will take less time, larger institutions will take more time.

Campus Tour

The inspector will tour the facility and will observe different areas of the school. This does include observing a live lecture/class; housing arrangements; food facilities; library; administration offices; and the area where student files are stored.

Designated School Official DSO Interview

The inspector will interview at least one designated school official and ask about processes pertaining to the regulations governing F and M students and their dependents. The inspector, at a minimum, will ask about the school's processes and knowledge relating to the eligibility of students to attend, process to transfer students in or out, monitoring student status, student reinstatements, employment or practical training authorization, and other processes and regulations of the program. The DSO must present a broad knowledge of the regulations.

Review of Randomly Selected Student Files

The inspector will review specific student files as mandated by federal regulation 8 CFR 214.3(h)(4). The inspector will provide the names of the students upon arrival for the site visit. This part of the inspection process determines whether the school keeps the required documentation in the student files (digital images are acceptable). Information in the file must be consistent with information provided in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and in compliance with the recordkeeping and reporting requirements set forth in 8CFR214.2(g). Storing information electronically is acceptable as long as the method complies with federal regulations and is legible.

Documentation Requirements

The inspector will collect all required documentation from the PDSO and mail them to the SEVP office for adjudication. Documentation requirements differ based on the type of school and accreditation. See Attachment A for documentation requirements by type of school and accreditation. **Please prepare this information in a folder (no binders please). All PDSOs and DSOs listed on the I-17 must provide proof of US citizenship or Legal Permanent Resident status (A copy of one of the following is sufficient: birth certificate, passport-expired or current, naturalization certificate, Form I-551 (greencard)).** No other forms are acceptable.

Schools Previously Denied or Withdrawn

Please have ready a copy of the official notification from immigration of reasons for denial or previous withdrawal. If official notification is not available, please provide any correspondence with immigration.

Required Signatures

The inspector must take the original Form I-17 at the completion of the site visit. Original signatures are required on Form I-17, page 3 and Form I-17A, pages 1 & 2. The Owner, President, Board Chairperson, or Head of School must sign Form I-17, page 3 **and** Form I-17A, page 2. For **public high schools** the signature must be the Superintendent. Form I-17A requires original signatures of all individuals listed as the Principal Designated School Official (PDSO) and Designated School Officials (DSOs). If the same person is a DSO for multiple campuses, each Form I-17A for each campus must be signed. Do not type or write any changes on this form. All changes must be completed electronically through SEVIS.

Adjudication Process

After the site visit has been conducted, please allow at least 90 business days for adjudication. All individuals with a temporary UserID and password will be notified via email (through SEVIS) if the school was approved or denied. Please do not respond to this email, as this account is not monitored.

Request for Evidence (RFE)

On occasion, the SEVP office will need to request additional information or evidence from a school. This process is known as an "RFE". This results in an email generated automatically from SEVIS, outlining what further information is needed and is sent solely to the PDSO. Therefore, it is very important that all email addresses are accurately maintained in SEVIS.

Regulations state that a school has 90 calendar days to respond to an RFE. If after 90 calendar days no response is received on the RFE, the school's petition may be denied for lack of prosecution.

State Licensure/Registration/Proof of Exemption

If the State in which the school is located does not require registration or license, the school must obtain Proof of Exemption from the State's Department of Education. However, if the school is approved by the state for veterans study, this is acceptable in lieu of state license/registration. Private school affidavits meet the requirements of state licensure.

Copy of Site Visit Results

A copy of the site visit results will not be provided to the school. All inquiries should be sent to the School Certification unit via email.

FERPA

Nonimmigrant students are not covered by FERPA with respect to information collecting and releasing information to federal agencies with respect to SEVP/SEVIS. The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996, states:

"The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 [20 U.S.C. 1232g] shall not apply to aliens described in subsection (a) of this section to the extent that the Attorney General determines necessary to carry out the program under subsection (a) of this section."

Questions/Concerns/Commendations/To Report Problems

If you have any questions, concerns, or wish to recognize an individual from the SEVP office, send an email to schoolcert.sevis@dhs.gov. SEVP Address:

800 K Street, NW
Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20536
Phone: 202-305-2346
Fax: 202-353-3723

ATTACHMENT A

Type of School	Documentation Required – Recognized Accreditation
Private/Public University, College or Seminary (F schools and/or M Schools)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original signed Form I-17 by Owner, President, Head of School • Original signed Form I-17A with all PDSO and DSO signatures and Owner, President, Head of School on page 2 of I-17A, • Copy of Accreditation certification • Copy of State license, registration, or proof of exemption • School catalog (information should outline grading policy, admission requirements, expulsion requirements, attendance policy, course requirements) •
Other Post-Secondary Schools (M Schools) In some cases, may be both F and M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original signed Form I-17 by Owner, President, Head of School • Original signed Form I-17A with all PDSO and DSO signatures and Owner, President, Head of School on page 2 of I-17A, • Copy of Accreditation certification • Copy of State license, registration, or proof of exemption • School catalog (information should outline grading policy, admission requirements, expulsion requirements, attendance policy, course requirements) • List of all programs of study, hours/week of instruction, hours/week of lab instruction, total hours per week, total hours to complete the program.
Private K-12 (F schools)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original signed Form I-17 by Owner, President, Head of School • Original signed Form I-17A with all PDSO and DSO signatures and Owner, President, Head of School on page 2 of I-17A, • Copy of Accreditation certification • Copy of State license, registration, or proof of exemption, or proof they fall under the State's DOE standards • School catalog, brochures (information should outline grading policy, admission requirements, expulsion requirements, attendance policy)
Intensive English Programs (F schools)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original signed Form I-17 by Owner, President, Head of School • Original signed Form I-17A with all PDSO and DSO signatures and Owner, President, Head of School on page 2 of I-17A, • Copy of Accreditation certification • Copy of State license, registration, or proof of exemption • School catalog, brochures (information should outline grading policy, admission requirements, expulsion requirements, attendance policy, and list of courses) • List of all programs of study, hours/week of instruction, hours/week of lab instruction, total hours per week, total hours to complete the program.
Public High Schools/Charter (F schools - In some cases, HS may apply for M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original signed Form I-17 by Superintendent • Original signed Form I-17A with all PDSO and DSO signatures and Superintendent on page 2 of I-17A, • Provide evidence school is public high school and/or charter school • List of all high schools within district/charter
Diocesan Schools (F schools)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original signed Form I-17 by Owner, President, Head of School • Original signed Form I-17A with all PDSO and DSO signatures and Owner, President, Head of School on page 2 of I-17A, • Copy of Accreditation certification • Copy of State license, registration, or proof of exemption • List of all schools within the diocese

Please note: Schools recognized by a state-approving agency as appropriate for study for veterans, can submit a statement of such recognition in lieu of state licensure/registration.

Type of School	Documentation Required: Non-Accredited or Accreditation not Recognized by the US Department of Education
Private/Public University, College, or Seminary (F schools and/or M schools)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original signed Form I-17 by Owner, President, Head of School • Original signed Form I-17A with all PDSO and DSO signatures and Owner, President, Head of School on page 2 of I-17A, • Copy of State license, registration, or proof of exemption • Letters from 3 accredited institutions that attest they have and will accept students/credits from the petitioning school. The letters must be on the receiving institutions letterhead, signed, and contain the student name, dates of enrollment, and program of study. • School catalog (information should outline grading policy, admission requirements, expulsion requirements, attendance policy, course requirements) • Certified financial statements of the school's net worth, income, and expenses. • A written statement containing information on educational, vocational, or professional qualifications of teaching staff, salaries of teachers, attendance and scholastic grading policy, amount and character of supervisory and consultative services available to students and trainees.
Post-Secondary Schools (M Schools) In some cases, may be both F & M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original signed Form I-17 by Owner, President, Head of School • Original signed Form I-17A with all PDSO and DSO signatures and Owner, President, Head of School on page 2 of I-17A, • Copy of State license, registration, or proof of exemption • Letters from 3 employers that have hired recent graduates (within the past 2 years) from the petitioning school in their field of study. The letters must be on the employer's letterhead, signed, and contain the student name, dates of employment, and position hired for. • School catalog (information should outline grading policy, admission requirements, expulsion requirements, attendance policy, course requirements) • Certified financial statements of the school's net worth, income, and expenses. • A written statement containing information on educational, vocational, or professional qualifications of teaching staff, salaries of teachers, attendance and scholastic grading policy, amount and character of supervisory and consultative services available to students and trainees. • List of all programs of study, hours/week of instruction, hours/week of lab instruction, total hours per week, total hours to complete the program.
Private K-12 (F schools)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original signed Form I-17 by Owner, President, Head of School • Original signed Form I-17A with all PDSO and DSO signatures and Owner, President, Head of School on page 2 of I-17A, • Copy of State license, registration, or proof of exemption • Letters from 3 accredited institutions that attest that they have accepted students from the petitioning school. The letters must be on the receiving institutions letterhead, signed, and contain the student name, dates of enrollment, and program of study. • School catalog, brochures (information should outline grading policy, admission requirements, expulsion requirements, attendance policy) • Certified financial statements of the school's net worth, income, and expenses. • A written statement containing information on educational, vocational, or professional qualifications of teaching staff, salaries of teachers, attendance and scholastic grading policy, amount and character of supervisory and consultative services available to students and trainees. • Provide evidence that attendance at the petitioning institution satisfies the compulsory attendance requirements of the State in which the school is located and that the petitioning school qualifies graduates for acceptance by schools of a higher educational level. <p>Note: Schools may submit letters from public school systems that have accepted transfer students from the petitioner. The letter must indicate the last grade completed at the private school and the grade accepted into at the public school.</p>

Type of School	Documentation Required: Non-Accredited or Accreditation not Recognized by the US Department of Education
Intensive English Programs (F schools)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original signed Form I-17 by Owner, President, Head of School • Original signed Form I-17A with all PDSO and DSO signatures and Owner, President, Head of School on page 2 of I-17A. • Copy of State license, registration, or proof of exemption • Letters from 3 accredited educational institutions that attest that they have accepted students from the petitioning school as "English Proficient." The letters must be on the receiving institutions letterhead, signed, and contain the student name, dates of enrollment, and program of study. • School catalog, brochures (information should outline grading policy, admission requirements, expulsion requirements, attendance policy, and list of courses) • A written statement containing information on educational, vocational, or professional qualifications of teaching staff, salaries of teachers, attendance and scholastic grading policy, amount and character of supervisory and consultative services available to students and trainees. • List of all programs of study, hours/week of instruction, hours/week of lab instruction, total hours per week, total hours to complete the program. • Certified financial statements of the school's net worth, income, and expenses.
Public High School (F schools – In some cases, may apply for M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same requirements as if they are accredited.
Diocesan Schools (F schools)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same requirements as Private K-12. In addition, they must provide a list of all schools within the Diocese they are seeking approval for.
Flight Training (M Schools)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original signed Form I-17 by Owner, President, Head of School • Original signed Form I-17A with all PDSO and DSO signatures and Owner, President, Head of School on page 2 of I-17A, • Copy of FAA Approval and Accompanying Letter (approval ratings) • Copy of State license, registration, or proof of exemption • School catalog, brochures, course hours for all approval ratings • List of all ratings, hours/week of instruction, total hours of lab training per week, time necessary to complete. • Certified financial statements of the school's net worth, income, and expenses.

Please note: Schools recognized by a state-approving agency as appropriate for study for veterans, can submit a statement of such recognition in lieu of state licensure/registration.